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Women in the Mission Field

THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

THE WORK TO BE DONE

By
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of Shanghai

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THE QUALIFICATIONS AND WORK OF WOMEN IN THE CHINA MISSION

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I. THE GREAT NEED

THE need for women to do the work of missionaries in China is very great. Whenever we think of the enormous population of that empire we must remember that one-half of it consists of women and that the conditions of Oriental life are such that work for them can only be done by women. We should also keep in mind the fact that the women of China are much more neglected and in need of help than the men. They are not so secluded as the women of India, but they are practically without education, or religion, or any provision for a higher life, except where these things have been brought to them by the work of missions. The call, then, to a Christian woman to devote herself to bringing light and help to these women is a very urgent one. The blessings that we enjoy can only come to them as the fruit and result of the work of Christian women who are content to live and labor in China for this end.

It is not intended in this paper to deal more at length with the needs of the women of China, but, assuming that they are known, and that there is a desire to obey the command of our Lord to disciple all nations, to give a few notes on the qualifications

of a woman who desires to enter the mission of our own Church in that country, and to present such definite information as to her life and work in China as may help her in making her decision and may serve to guide those who may have the training of such candidates for the mission before they leave home.

II. QUALIFICATIONS

1. *Health.*—Sound health is the first requisite, because if the missionary is not in good health she will not be able to do her work, or will do it with difficulty. The person who has good health at home will, as a rule, have good health in the Far East.

2. *Age.*—It has been found best to set an age limit. The candidate should be preferably not under twenty-five and not over thirty-five years old. Before twenty-five it is not considered that the purpose will always be fixed, or the physical constitution settled, or the experience of life have been sufficient to warrant the reasonable belief that the volunteer will remain permanently in the work. After thirty-five is considered as too late to enter upon the study of so exacting a language as the Chinese, which demands at least two years of study before the student is well grounded. These two years of study must be added to the age at which the missionary enters the mission in estimating the time when she will do really effective work in an independent way. The conditions of the work also demand a good deal of readjustment to strange surroundings and new people, and this is easier for those whose habits of life have not become

too fixed. Therefore the mission aims to secure its candidates as young as is compatible with stability, in the expectation that the worker will give the mission as long a service as possible; for the value of the missionary ought to increase with the length of time spent in the work and with the experience gained.

3. *Temper and Disposition.*—It is of the utmost importance that a woman desiring to enter the mission should be possessed of an even disposition and good temper. She is, by the nature of the work, thrown into close contact with other workers, and it is essential that she should learn to subordinate her own wishes and desires to the good of the work. The ability to get on well with others, patience, and amiability are of the first importance, for unless there is unity among the missionaries there can be no success in the work.

4. *Practical Ability.*—One of the first requisites to be inquired after is whether the applicant has a good store of common sense and practical ability. She will often have to assume responsibility and to do things which she has perhaps never learned specifically to do, and she will also need to manage the Chinese that are under her with tact and firmness.

5. *Education.*—The woman who is to do mission work will do it all the better if she has had a good education. Of course any education that would make her fastidious and unwilling to do disagreeable things would not be a good preparation for missionary work, but all education that has the effect of broadening the mind, especially general reading and experience of actual life, is the greatest help. It is not

so much the *learned* woman as the *wise* woman that is needed. Under this head it is hardly necessary to mention that the missionary should be a lady, with perfect control over herself in all circumstances, and with kind and gentle manners both towards her associates and towards the Chinese, who are keen judges of character.

6. *Religion.*—There is not much to dwell on this point since it ought to be perfectly evident that religion must be the groundwork of the character and that where this is lacking all will go wrong. The missionary ought to be filled with the love of Christ and to feel a real love for the souls for whom Christ died that will help her to spend herself in their service. She should be devout and earnest, and a loyal daughter of the Church; she should be willing to learn; she should be willing to work; for the mission needs those who are active and energetic in doing the work to which they have been sent.

III. TRAINING AT HOME

THE training should be largely practical. It should teach the candidate to work for others cheerfully and efficiently.

2. The training should be on Church lines. It should implant a real affection for the Church and her ways. It should make her realize that her work is to be done in and for the Church and as a member of a body, the mission. Her Prayer Book as well as her Bible ought to be well known and well loved.

3. It should be so managed as to constitute a real test of character. It should bring out the facts as

to patience, temper and stability as well as practical ability.

4. It should not include the study of the language. In China one can learn more Chinese in six weeks than in a year at home, so that the time devoted to the study, even if it were possible to obtain a teacher in the particular dialect required, would not be spent to advantage.

5. The training should be done in some institution managed by women, such as a sisterhood or training school for deaconesses. It should cover enough time to enable those who are responsible, to decide whether the applicant is or is not fitted for the field. Six months is the minimum time. But it is far better to take a full course of two years such as is provided by the two chief deaconess training schools. In cases where the applicant is not personally known to the Bishop he would look to the head of the house where the training has been conducted for a clear expression of opinion as to the fitness or unfitness of the person trained.

IV. LIFE IN CHINA

THERE are certain facts about the work in China which ought to be known to candidates and to those who are to train them.

1. *Climate.*—The climate in that part of China where our mission is stationed is not excessively cold in winter though we get some snow and a good deal of frost. The summers are trying on account of the damp heat in the early part of the season and the very hot weather of July and August. It is

hotter up the Yangtse Valley than at Shanghai. The thermometer does not run to higher figures than in the parts of the United States on the same parallels, 30 degrees to 32 degrees, but the climate is more trying. Care has to be taken to keep out of the midday sun and in questions of diet. The doctors of the mission attend in cases of sickness. In the extreme heat it is arranged that a vacation can be taken. There are special rules governing this matter of vacations and expenses for the same. Our missionaries as a rule enjoy good health. The climate is not a sickly one though trying to our northern constitutions. Those who are deterred, however, by the fact that the thermometer ranges high in summer are certainly not the persons that we want. One who has a real call will come no matter what the discomforts of climate may be.

2. *Outfit.*—The Board of Missions provides money for an outfit for new missionaries. Half this sum at least should be reserved to purchase what is needed in Shanghai. Clothing can be bought here as easily and more cheaply than in the United States, with the exception of cotton fabrics and underclothing. Furniture is best bought here unless one has a favorite desk or the like that can readily be sent out. The cost of freight comes out of the missionary's pocket. We advise persons coming out to bring their books and a few pictures with them as they do so much to make the house seem homelike. All the necessaries of life can be bought in Shanghai, so that it is not necessary to lay in any large stock.

3. *Language.*—As soon as the missionary gets

here she is provided with the proper textbooks and a Chinese teacher and set to the study of the language. There is a regular course of study laid down in the mission covering two years with examinations every six months. At the end of a year the beginner ought to have a fair knowledge of everyday Chinese so as to be able to talk to the people, and at the end of two years she should speak readily and be able to teach elementary subjects in Chinese or begin classes among the women. In the time while the language is being studied enough English teaching in the schools or other work is given to the new missionary to fill in the time when she is not studying and make her feel from the first that she is of use in the mission.

4. *Quarters.*—The missionary has rooms either in a house with other single ladies or with one of the married families. We aim to give each lady a bed room and a study, but arrangements as to rooms cannot be absolute, but must depend on the number of workers in a station and other conditions which cannot always be foreseen. She has to buy her own furniture. She either keeps house with other single ladies, or alone, or boards with one of the married families.

5. *Health.*—Health can be preserved by care and attention to the necessity of taking sufficient exercise and by such precautions as are demanded by the climate. With care one should be as well here as in America.

6. *Salary.*—The salary given by the Church is adequate to supply the missionary with food and clothing and to cover all reasonable wants, but it is

not large enough for anyone to lay up any considerable sum. It has been, of course, calculated on the basis of supplying necessary expenses. One can live comfortably on it, but should not expect to do more. This is explained because there are candidates who wish to come out but who have certain obligations at home which must be met out of their salary. It is not considered wise that any one should come depending on the salary to send any considerable sum to the United States. In general the same differences exist among missionaries that exist anywhere; there are those who get along easily on the amount allowed, and there are others who find it hard to be economical.

V. WORK IN THE MISSION

THE point on which information is most desired is upon the work that a woman will be called upon to do when she gets into the field. There are two things that ought to be understood in advance, first, that a lady is not sent away into remote inland stations, but that her work lies in the completing and carrying out, under the authorities of the mission, the work among the women in the stations where there are already workers. At the same time it is but right to remind the candidate that it is not always possible to provide that she will not sometimes have to carry on a work without the companionship of other single ladies, but furloughs or sickness may bring this about, and she ought to be prepared to do this when necessary.

The second thing is that work in a mission is like

any other kind of work in that it requires patience and diligence to make it a success, and the woman who is afraid of hard work or who has the idea that mission work is not tiring and trying because it is mission work ought not to come to this field. There is a rule which is an infallible guide in the choice of a worker, namely, that a woman who will do good work at home as a parish worker, or teacher, or in any other capacity, will be likely to do good work in China, and conversely, whoever has been inefficient at home will be a failure here. That the outward circumstances of our lives are a little different and that the work is done in a strange language counts for very little. The useful woman in America will be a useful woman in China and the useless woman there will be useless here. It is not special requirements so much that we need, as will be seen by a reference to the list of qualifications already given, but the solid groundwork of character, the virtues of patience, diligence, and prayerfulness, of common sense and practical ability. These are the qualities that make any work succeed and the work in China is no exception.

But when we have our missionary, and she is ready to come to China, what work is she to do for the Church when she gets here?

1. *School Work.*—There is first school work for girls. We have in the mission a number of girls' day-schools into which are gathered the wholly uneducated daughters, sometimes of Christian, more often of heathen parents. Nothing but the fewness of our women workers keeps us from largely in-

creasing this branch of the work. To be done as it should be requires a good deal of attention. The missionary should go from school to school examining the work of the teachers, who are women, and the progress of the pupils. She should give them regular instruction in religious matters and examine the school at the time for examinations. It is a most useful work for a woman to do.

Then come the boarding schools. These schools are intended to keep the pupils longer under instruction and wholly separate from heathen influences. They send out continually Christian girls to teach others or to become the wives of our Chinese teachers and clergy and young laymen. In time past it has happened more than once that one of these schools has been closed in spite of the good work it had been doing, simply because we had not the woman to put in charge of it. In this work there is scope for a great deal of good management in the expenditure of the appropriation for the support of the school and in all the details of the household, such as the food, clothing, and health of the girls as well as in the work of teaching and religious instruction. It is a useful, busy life for any woman to look forward to, and one that is full of all sorts of opportunities for influence upon the lives of the pupils. What this work accomplishes may be seen by the graduates of our schools and the vast superiority they show over heathen women, or even over Christian women who have received no education.

One who is fond of children would find ample occupation in such an institution as the Orphanage in Soochow, where many little ones that have been

rescued from miserable surroundings are reared and taught. To care for these little children in sickness and in health is a most exacting task, and demands great care and patience, but it is a great and good work.

2. *Medical Work.*—The work of the nurse and woman physician opens vast opportunities for doing good. A most useful work for a woman missionary who is neither nurse nor doctor would be to devote herself to following up the work of the doctors in hospitals by calling upon the women in their homes and trying to keep them under the influence of the truth they have learned during their stay in the institution. The doctors themselves are so occupied with the medical part of the work that they have very little time to devote to this most important duty.

3. *Evangelistic Work.*—But the work where we can employ any number of women, and which ought to be pushed far more than it ever has been, is the evangelistic work.

[a] There is the training of Bible women or female catechists. Then when these women have been trained there is the direction and employment of them in the work of teaching heathen women or Christian women who need further instruction. These Bible women cannot be left to themselves; they need constant direction and to be shown how to do the work as well as to be sustained while they are doing it by the strength and sympathy of the foreign missionary.

[b] For the Christian women in our congregations there are needed weekly classes. In these

classes the Bible is read and explained, and a careful and methodical instruction in sacred things is kept up. The native or foreign clergy can appear at one of the classes and give an address if the foreign lady is presiding, but the work of explaining and enforcing what has been said should be done by the lady missionary and her Bible women, and the instruction will be all the more effective if it is given entirely by women. How great a work is here sketched for any one who will come and tell the simple truths of religion to these waiting women. Other classes can be formed to teach the women how to read their Bibles and to join intelligently in the services. A large station like Shanghai, Hankow, or Wuchang will afford an endless amount of work for women missionaries, and the work admits of indefinite development.

[c] There is also the preparation of women and girls for baptism. This, as well as their future instruction in the mission catechisms, is best done by ladies. The Chinese women cannot be visited in their homes by the clergy, but the lady missionary is always welcome. The women will very likely be dumb to any question a man may ask to test their knowledge of sacred things, but will respond readily enough to a woman. Considering the rate at which the women are coming into our Church, it is extremely important that they should be thoroughly prepared for baptism and regularly instructed after it in classes, a work which is above all others the work of the lady missionary.

[d] Others may find occupation in calling on both heathen and Christian women in their homes

and opening an acquaintance with them which may bring into the Church those who are heathen, and will certainly do much to continue in the unity of the Church those who are already Christian. Much good can be done by these calls in an indirect way, by tact and judicious sympathy, and an influence can be gained which can be used to prevent the evils of foot-binding, to make homes brighter and happier, and to spread a knowledge of the principles of health and cleanliness, besides the directly religious work that can be done.

[e] The last branch of work that we shall mention is literary work. Some women will be glad to fit themselves to undertake the translation of books into Chinese for the use of women and girls. There is no greater want just now than a supply of good books, stories and the like, in a simple style, and such books would have a wide circulation outside of our own communion.

VI. CONCLUSION

THIS paper may be briefly summed up by saying that there exists in China, and particularly in our own mission, a great need for women workers. The qualities that should characterize them are the qualities that are required in an efficient worker at home, only we ought to be doubly sure that the missionary sent is the right one because of the distance and expense, and the delay in filling her place if there be a failure. The work that women can do is so manifold that it affords opportunity for persons of the most varied gifts, and so absorbing that it will give

the fullest employment to all the powers. It is our experience that in every case where the missionary was of the right sort, the work, however hard, has been one in which they have been happy, as is natural when it is felt that life is being spent usefully and as God wills it.

Lastly, it often happens that changes occur between the time of the appointment of the missionary and her arrival in the field, and even after work has been begun it is sometimes found necessary to transfer the missionary to another branch of the work. We all live and work here for the best interest of the mission, and it is well for the newcomer to bear this in mind and to be ready to accept any changes that are made for this end. If the work and the mission have the first place in the heart all else will be as it should be.

While this leaflet has been prepared with the work of the Church's Mission in China primarily in view, its statements apply with only minor modifications to work in all Mission fields.

Copies of this leaflet may be had in any quantity by asking the Corresponding Secretary, 281 Fourth Avenue, New York, for leaflet No. 944.

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